

ment at the beginning of the year, there were in all 15 reserves in respect of which claims had to be enquired into by the Forest Settlement Officers, out of which one was cancelled and two were completed during the year. The remaining 12 were pending settlement at the close of the year. The progress was unsatisfactory. The Peishkars have been asked to devote greater attention than they had been hitherto doing to this important work and to bring it to an early completion. Of the 13 reserves which had been settled in 1082, 6 were finally gazetted under Section 18, four were pending with the Reserve Settlement Officer for revision of boundaries, two with the High Court on appeal, and one with the Forest Settlement Officer, Trivandrum, for the acquisition of claims. The Acting Conservator has made the following observations in regard to the forest settlement work: "the blocks were not demarcated, before settlement enquiry began, as Forest Settlement Officers did not perambulate or inspect the boundaries and claims before passing their decisions, and this has resulted in many existing claims escaping settlement and in new claims arising by the subsequent registration of lands. Unless these defects are remedied, it is hopeless to expect the correct and efficient settlement of claims in reserves." His Highness' Government have informed the Peishkars that they view this state of affairs with grave disapproval and that they insist on the rules dated 28th August 1903, laying down the procedure to be adopted by Forest Settlement Officers, being strictly followed. The Conservator has been asked to submit proposals for revising the rules, should he find them defective in operation.

25. Fuel and fodder reserves.—Out of the existing fuel and fodder areas, 8 were notified for reservation, but one of these was subsequently cancelled. The progress made cannot be considered satisfactory. The Acting Conservator has been asked to expedite the reservation of the remaining tracts intended for fuel and fodder purposes.

26. Demarcation and survey.—74 miles of permanent reserve boundaries were cut and 356 miles of existing boundaries were re-cleared during the year, at a cost of Rs. 22.8 and Rs. 10.6 per mile. His Highness' Government have informed the Acting Conservator that they concur in his observations regarding the necessity for the preliminary demarcation of reserved lands under settlement and the permanent demarcation of reserved forests and of enclosures within them, and that they look to him to give effect to his views. No survey work of any importance was undertaken during the year.

27. Working plans.—The scheme for the preparation of working plans, on a rotation of 20 years, introduced from the beginning of 1082, in all the divisions except the Southern, was followed during the year. The Acting Conservator has brought to notice that, as the annual coupes had not been fixed with reference to the crop standing and its capability to yield the out-turn expected as per contracts entered into for the supply of timber from the coupes, much valuable timber such as teak and blackwood might have been overcut, and that, unless further exploitation of such species was stopped till a rough valuation survey in each of the working circles had been made, there was the danger of bringing about a total extinction of those species of valuable timber. Steps are being taken to explore the working circles and to determine their capability in respect of the more valuable species before further fellings are allowed. During the year under review, one coupe in each of the

working circles, in all the divisions except the Southern, was worked for the extraction of standing timbers of the principal and auxiliary species. The working plan report of the Shendurni valley forests was sanctioned. The remaining portions of the Kulathupuzha and Yerur working circles were completely explored and valued. The whole of the Ariankavu working circle was also valued. On the whole, about 127 square miles of forests were explored and valued during the year under review, against 73 square miles in 1082. One of the Deputy Conservators was on special duty for making a valuation survey of the teak plantations in the State. He completed the survey and submitted a working plan report, which was sanctioned. His Highness' Government are anxious that this important work should be pushed through to completion. The Acting Conservator has been asked to devote his special attention to the matter and to submit similar working plans for the other reserves as early as possible.

28. Communications and buildings.—A sum of Rs. 13,860 was spent during the year—Rs. 6,130 on roads and bridges, Rs. 7,194 on buildings and Rs. 536 on other works. The work done in all the divisions is reported to have been satisfactory.

29. Forest offences.—745 cases of offences against the forest laws were received during the year, and including the 234 cases pending at the beginning of the year, there were for disposal 979 cases. Of these, 226 cases were thrown out as false by the department and 564 cases were prosecuted, leaving a balance of 189 cases pending at the end of the year. Inclusive of the 138 cases of last year, 702 cases were prosecuted, of which 142 were convicted, 72 acquitted, 331 compounded and 37 withdrawn, leaving a balance of 120 cases at the end of the year. The progress made in the disposal of cases was satisfactory. The percentages of convictions and acquittals to the total number of cases disposed of by the Magistrates were 66 and 34 respectively. The amount of compensation realised in cases compounded was Rs. 2,041. The largest number of offences committed was under "damage to royal and reserved trees", the number being 224, against 88 in the year previous. Cases of illicit collection, possession or removal of timber and of forest produce, and of unauthorised clearing within reserves, numbered 220 and 9 respectively, against 192 and 47 in 1082.

30. Forest fires.—Out of the total area of forest reserves, only the teak and other plantations, aggregating 2,827 acres, were under regular fire-protection for four months. The whole of this protected area except half an acre was immune from fire during the year. His Highness' Government realise the necessity for gradually bringing other areas under a regular system of fire-protection by cutting and tracing fire lines and employing a larger patrolling staff. The Acting Conservator has been asked to keep this important matter in view and to work out a scheme so as to extend efficient protection to the more valuable of the forests, within the course of a few years. The total cost incurred on fire protection amounted to Rs. 2,925. An area of 37 square miles was burnt during the year, against 6 square miles in 1082.

31. Forest produce.—The total quantity of timber removed from the forests was 9,30,175 cubic feet or 9,200 cubic feet more than in 1082. Of this, 8,13,664 cubic feet were removed by Sirkar agency, 1,12,827 cubic feet by private